

Inventors tackle troll woes with new device

By Alvin Peabody

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Three Hall County businessmen have launched a new concept in fishing rod holders that they say could make fishing more enjoyable.

The business partners - Bob Davenport, Robby Robinson and Louis Gibbs - unveiled their product, Fold-N-Troll, this week in Gainesville at the Satterfield's Sporting Goods store and West Marine.

The businessmen are confident their product will be successful in the Gainesville-Hall county market, where boating is big business - thanks to the 38,000-acre Lake Lanier.

There are nearly 30 boat dealers in the Gainesville-Hall county area. Their inventories include varying brands, of bass boats, pontoons, deck boats and cruisers.

"This product is a perfect setup for people who love fishing," said Matt Willbanks, an avid fisherman.

"It's neat in that it requires no extra hardware on the boat."

The Fold-N-Troll, which is patented, sells for around \$200. It holds four fishing rods and can be installed in a variety of boats, including bass boats, pontoons, deck boats and cruisers.

If you remove the standard fishing seat, the product fits atop the seat pedestal. As it unfolds, it automatically deploys the four rod holders into a trolling pattern.

The outer two rod holders are indexed to allow further spreading of the rod tips. For storage, the



Robby Robinson demonstrates the Fold-N-Troll attached to the back of a boat. The device slips into the opening where the seat usually is and enables a fisherman to troll with four rods at once. Robinson and two other local businessmen invented the device.

product doubles into a compact alignment, with the two arms folding together.

The Fold-N-Troll came about nearly eight years ago when Davenport, a Gainesville printing executive, bought a boat from Robinson.

The boat didn't have rod holders when Davenport took it out for a fishing trip.

"When Bob laid his fishing rod on the side of the boat with bait in the water, a fish came along and took off with one of his poles," said Robinson, owner of the Boat Center.

Davenport later asked Robinson if there was a rod holder on the market that could be installed without having to drill holes.

"Bob didn't want to drill holes into the fiberglass of the boat to install conventional rod holders," Robinson said. "Drilling holes can also affect the resale value of the boat."

After several years of planning, Davenport and Robinson partnered with Gibbs, an engineer, to invent the Fold-N-Troll.

Nationwide distribution is being set up through major retailers such as Bass Pro Shops, Galyan's, Cabela's Marine and Overton's, Gibbs said.

